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“University Cities” in Russia, France and Japan: Similarities and Peculiarities in the Context of Higher Education Internationalization¹⁾

Olga V. Kolesova*
Anastasia M. Pogorelskaya**
Petr E. Podalko***

The article reviews the current state of academic mobility in certain regions and countries of the world. These issues gained currency due to the need to compare European and Asian strategies of higher education internationalization. Moreover, these strategies have an impact on the development of university cities, since higher education is becoming an important prerequisite for successful regional development. This article gives a comparative analysis of current trends in Siberian, European and Asian university cities with respect to development in the context of internationalization of higher education. Competition among universities is rising due to the globalization of higher education. Therefore, the article also covers the organizations, programmes, initiatives and projects that different countries use for increasing the competitiveness of their higher education systems in the world.

* Head of the Laboratory for Comparative Studies in Urbanism (National Research Tomsk State University), Head of the Siberian Regional Center of the International Weekly Newspaper of Russian Academy of Sciences, Vice-President of French Society Cercle Kondratieff (Novosibirsk)

** PhD in World History, Deputy Director of the Excellence Support Unit & Senior Lecturer of the World Politics Department, National Research Tomsk State University (Tomsk)

*** Professor, School of International Politics, Economics & Communication, Aoyama Gakuin University (Tokyo)

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Russian universities and university cities have recently joined the process of higher education internationalization as well as the competition for academic reputation, improving the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of students including international ones. The modernization of Russian higher education to meet the challenges of time results in the reconsideration of university working principles as well as the rules of interaction between the university and the city for uniting the efforts to improve the quality of education and research. Taking into consideration the current state of Russian higher education, in 2012 the President of Russia posed the task of ensuring the strategic development of universities and improving their competitiveness in the world (President of the Russian Federation, 2012).

According to international university rankings, including the QS and the THE World University Rankings, one of the criteria reflecting the quality of university functioning is the proportion of international students. In addition, these rankings estimate the level of internationalization by the proportion of foreign citizens among the university teaching and research staff (THE, 2016). Therefore, the level of academic mobility is essential for evaluating both a university evaluation and the whole higher education system.

Nowadays there are around 200 thousand universities in the world, 1171 of which are located in Russia (Times, 2018). Large and strong research universities do not just influence the social situation in the city and its economy. They become the city center and one of its development drivers. This role of the university makes researchers use the term “university city” to denote the city that has a long history of higher education or is gaining this status right now. Nowadays universities have to become open structures that are engaged both in education and science as well as in public activities. Therefore, the “university city” is a long-term social and economic structure. This statement does not mean the exclusive status of “university city” attached to world famous Cam-

bridge, Oxford and Harvard or less known cities like Tomsk in Russia. On the contrary, it covers the activation of universities and their completely new role in the city life and economy. It may be considered a rather natural strategy for relatively small cities with a population less than 500 thousand people. However, the need to choose such a development strategy poses a problem for large cities with a population over 1 million people. Thus, the status of the “university city” cannot be attributed tacitly but the trend still takes place.

The change of the “university city” role is caused by the formation of the information society and the new economy that are based on human capital, knowledge and information. This change has made it necessary to analyze this phenomenon and review the processes taking place in university cities. One such process is the internationalization of higher education.

According to the definition given by the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1996, the term “academic mobility” implies a period of study, teaching and/or research in a country other than a student’s or academic staff member’s country of residence (the “home country”). This period is of limited duration, and it is envisaged that the student or staff member return to his or her home country upon completion of the designated period (Council of Europe, 1996). The level of academic mobility development is one of the indexes used for measuring the extent of the internationalization of higher education. Although these two concepts used to be considered the same twenty years ago, nowadays internationalization is thought to be a more complex phenomenon and academic mobility is supposed to be one of its elements (Bologna Follow-up Group, 2015: 210).

The need for academic mobility development in Europe became one of the incentives for launching the Bologna process. In 1999 the representatives of 29 European states signed the Bologna declaration and promised to harmonize their systems of education in order to provide the opportunity to participate in academic mobility for students, researchers and university member staff in all member-states of the European higher education area (EHEA). To promote academic mobility

universities have to grant and mutually recognize their diplomas. Together with attaining other aims of the Bologna process, the development of academic mobility had to make higher education of the member-states attractive for university entrants from all over the world. Statistics prove that the aim has been achieved. According to the OECD, the number of international students in 2012 was 568 thousand in the UK, 287 thousand in Germany, and 271 thousand in France. In the same year the number of international students in Australia was 221 thousand people, in Japan 150.6 thousand people (OECD, 2012).

According to the Bucharest Communiqué that was published after the Ministerial conference of 47 EHEA member-states in April 2012, the main obstacles to academic mobility were difficulties in diplomas and qualifications' acknowledgement, the lack of financial support for students, differences in the educational programs of different countries, insufficient expert assessment of the Bologna process realization, and insufficient informing of the public about the principles of the EHEA. Therefore, European ministers of education elaborated the strategy for the development of outgoing academic mobility in the EHEA in order to make 20% of university graduates in the EHEA participate in academic mobility by 2020 (EHEA, 2012).

The characteristics of Russian higher education are not so critical in absolute numbers. However, the percentage describing the internationalization of Russian higher education is much worse than the characteristics of the countries that are world leaders in providing higher education services. According to the Bologna Follow-up Group, in 2013–2014 the number of Russian universities realizing joint educational programs was about 11–25%, yet not all of them had the right to confer joint degrees. According to Higher School of Economics, Russia, in 2015–2016 the number of international students in Russia was about 5% of all students or about 237.5 thousand people. In the UK the number of international students (including other EU member-states citizens) was about 20% or 438 thousand people in the same year (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2018).

The indexes cited above prove that Russian higher education is nei-

ther competitive around the world nor attractive for international students. Despite joining the Bologna process in 2003, Russian universities have not witnessed any mass influx of international students. However, it gave Russian students more opportunities to receive higher education abroad. Thereupon, there have been several initiatives for improving the internationalization of higher education adopted in Russia.

In 2014 Russian Government adopted the state program “Global Education” that was aimed at preserving and increasing the number of highly qualified professionals in Russia. The program guaranteed financial support for those Russian citizens who entered foreign universities, chose the priority directions of Russian economic development and agreed to return to Russia and work there for at least 3 years. The program was supposed to cover 718 people within the period of 2014–2025. The participants could apply for a Bachelor’s, Master’s or PhD program in 32 specialties in 288 universities of 32 countries (Ministry of Higher Education of the Russian Federation, 2014).

The other initiative for promoting the internationalization of Russian higher education was the project “The development of export potential of the Russian educational system” launched in Russian higher education in 2017. It is aimed at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of Russian higher education in the world. It also seeks to increase the number of international students receiving higher education in Russian universities up to 710 thousand people in 2025. The increase in the number of international students has to result in the fivefold growth of the profit gained by providing educational services reaching 373 billion rubles in 2025. In addition, the project implies the promotion of Russian higher education abroad, the development of new joint educational programs and distance-learning as well as summer schools for foreigners.

Tomsk State University deals with urgent research in current world trends of higher education internationalization in different countries, as well as currents characteristics of international academic mobility. In 2016–2017 a research group at Tomsk State University conducted the research concerning characteristics of educational, innovative and scientific cooperation of Russia with Eurasian and South Asian countries that

was sponsored by the Russian Ministry of Education. The research results proved that many administrative and legal obstacles, as well as the lack of prestige of the Russian higher education system and the Russian language in the world, prevent international students from entering Russian universities.

An international summer school “Youth of Europe: Education, Job, Leisure” was run by Tomsk State University from June 22–26, 2016 in order to let researchers and students discuss the opportunities provided by the European countries for education and work of young people. The international summer school “Higher Education and Academic Mobility of Youth in Modern Integration Processes” run in Tomsk on July 2–5, 2017 was focused upon opportunities for academic mobility and international integration in higher education. The summer school participants elaborated the pattern of the “University of the Future” that will ensure international academic mobility and the university’s integration into the world educational market.

There are 10 universities in Tomsk, 6 of which are the branches of universities based in other regions. The universities originally founded in Tomsk include Tomsk State University (occupying 9th position in the 2018 Russian universities ranking) and Tomsk Polytechnic University (7th position). In 2017 there were 59.8 thousand students at all levels (Bachelor, Specialist and Master’s programs) in Tomsk universities, 20% of whom were international students. Tomsk State University provided higher education for 14,359 students, and Tomsk Polytechnic University for 18,691 students. Tomsk may be considered a university city because it has the population of 574 thousand people, about 10.5% of whom are students (2018). In addition, the history of the city has been determined by its universities very much. Tomsk State University was founded in 1878 as the first Siberian Imperial University. Tomsk Polytechnic University was founded in 1896 as Tomsk Technological Institute. University staff is made up of leading researchers; the student community has well-established traditions that are based on historical practices.

During the Second University City Forum that was run by Tomsk State University on November 30th — December 2nd, 2017 experts

focused on current trends and problems of academic mobility development in different countries. The participants of the roundtable “Smart University City: Becoming attractive with academic mobility programs” pointed out that Asia traditionally lacks academic mobility. In 2015 Asian countries sent abroad 2.3 million students but got just 929 thousand incoming international students. In 2014 the prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, stated the aim to attract 300 thousand international students to Japanese universities by 2020. The country has succeeded: within the period of 2013–2016 the number of international students increased by 40%. The main sending country for international students to Japan is China. Japan is still interested in increasing the number of international students because it has many universities. The number of universities in the country has increased from 500 in 1990 to 780 in 2014. In addition, the demographic situation in Japan is characterized by the steady aging of its population. Therefore, Japan aims at gaining the status of a reliable educational services provider in the world, especially for neighboring Asian countries. For this purpose in 2014 the Japanese Government launched the project called Top Global University Project that is going to allocate 7.7 billion yen among 37 leading Japanese universities that will be transformed into educational and research centers at the world level that will attract foreign researchers and international students and compete at the world educational services level (MEXT, 2014).

The contemporary internationalization movement in Japan, known as *kokusaika*, is conspicuous for its longevity and ubiquity. However, the popularity of *kokusaika* is a mixed blessing some would say. To a certain number of the intellectuals, the whole idea of *kokusaika* (not the internationalization itself!) has meant “the importation of goods, ideas and tastes that, by virtue of their superficiality, held the promise of improvement without the threat of disturbing change”²⁾, putting the idea of internationalization in a subtle aroma of romance and undermining the movement as a whole. Without doubt, the word *kokusaika* has been overused,

2) Mark Lincicome, “Focus on Internationalization of Japanese education”, *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 37, No 2, p. 123, 1993.

as it also happened with the word *johoka* (spreading of information, or so-called “informatization”). However, the real significance of the internationalization movement lies in its very ambiguity. How much should the Japanese become internationalized, or globalized, as it is more often called these days, to be able to adopt all the possible progressive achievements from the other world while still being true to themselves? What are the real aims and possible goals of the internationalization movement, especially in education? As we all know, sometimes there is a fierce struggle over the aims, content, and control of education in certain countries. The outcome of that struggle determines whether the educational system adopts or avoids the kind of fundamental changes which are necessary in order for internationalization to proceed.

As for Japan, according to the general view of modern history, the first great educational reform was launched in 1872 at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration by introducing universal compulsory education as a law. It demanded a concentrated program of westernization, modernization and industrialization to enable the nation to catch up with the West. One of the main slogans of that period was: “Enrich the country, strengthen the army.” Various historical myths and legends were mobilized to legitimize this program of reform which finds its center in *Yamato damasii* (an old phrase meaning “Japanese spirit”).

The second major reform of education began under the Allied Occupation after World War II. It aimed to remove all traces of the militaristic and ultra-nationalistic education that had led the Japanese nation to war with the West, replacing it with education that would build a nation of peace and culture, aiming at the realization of democracy, freedom, equality etc. During that period, education was opened to the broader masses, expanding in response to the demand for higher economic growth. This program did indeed help Japan to achieve her goals and catch up with the modernized West. However, in the early 1970s the costs of such success also became apparent: not only in industrial pollution, but as well in a loss of respect for humanity and nature, a neglect of spiritual development in favor of pure materialism, a weakening of traditional values and strong dependence on western models, pretending

to be sometimes “more western than the westerners themselves.” Therefore, certain changes were in great demand, and so the third great educational reform launched by the Central Council of Education in 1974, led to the establishment of the National Council on Educational Reform (NCER) in 1984 to study such issues as “coping with internationalization,” “basic requirements for an education relevant to the twenty-first century,” “improving the quality of teachers,” “coping with the information age” and so on.

Thirty years have passed since then, but almost nothing has changed. The Japanese continue to speak about *kokusaika* and its challenges and demands in the educational sphere. Moreover, subjects like World History and World Geography are no longer included in the compulsory curriculum of high school education. Therefore, what most Japanese students know about the world and the Earth, its old days and its past, is generally based on what they have memorized while studying at junior-high schools at the age of 13–15. At high schools in modern Japan the standard curriculum provides students the right to choose one of four selective subjects: World or Japanese History, World or Japanese Geography. That makes it technically possible for a university lecturer of Humanitarian Studies to have in the same class students with four different backgrounds of knowledge. Therefore, the teacher’s first task in this case will be equalizing their gaps and bringing all of them up to a certain level in order to begin teaching the subject at hand.

What kind of internationalization could be achieved with such an educational policy? How can the Japanese exclude history and geography from compulsory subjects and still pretend to list themselves as a well-developed country? These and many other questions are at risk of remaining only rhetoric. However, the sooner they can be answered in a proper way, the earlier Japanese society will become truly “internationalized” in every sense of the word — not only in a growing consumption of imported goods or fashions.

Certainly, the need to encourage academic mobility is urgent not only for Asian countries but also the European leaders of the world educational services market. Thus, France occupies the fifth place in the world

for the number of its students studying abroad. From year to year more French citizens go abroad to get higher education. According to the OECD, French Bachelor's students prefer neighboring countries. For instance, 44.2% of them go to Belgium, 29.5% to Luxembourg, 26.9% to Switzerland. French Master's students mostly go to Luxembourg (34.9%), Belgium (20.1%) and Switzerland (12.7%) (Krasnova & Pyhtina, 2016).

Originally French universities aimed at attracting international students. The oldest French university — the Sorbonne founded in 1215 — was supposed to become the “university with an international level.” Therefore, four of its faculties (Theology, Law, Medicine and Arts) enrolled not only French but also English, German and Flemish students. Nowadays French universities maintain this tradition. In 1998 the French government established “Agence EduFrance.” It had to ensure that about 20 thousand students of different levels and researchers studied abroad. The main funding source of the organization is funds from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, nowadays there are 175 bureaus of Campus France — the French state agency for French higher education promotion abroad.

The work of different French organizations for attracting international students seems to be rather effective. According to the University City Association of France, the number of international students in France has been rising both in Paris and in provincial universities. For instance, in 2015–2016 the University of Poitiers provided higher education for more than 4 thousand international students from 136 countries, mostly from Africa (Maghreb), other EU Member-states and Asian countries, especially China.

According to Campus France, France is one of the foreground academic mobility destinations for most Siberian students. They prefer courses in Language and Literature Studies (23% of Siberian students in France), Science and Technologies (18%), Economics (14%). They mostly travel as individual participants of academic mobility (63%), much fewer of them come to France for double-degree programs (16%), within the inter-university cooperation agreements (14%), and joint PhD

supervision (7%). 27% of such trips have been financially supported by the Embassy of France programs and grants. By 2017 there have been 62 framework cooperation agreements signed between French and Siberian universities, 25 double-degree programs launched as well as 11 Erasmus+ agreements launched.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that nowadays many countries of the world aim at higher education internationalization and increase of academic mobility. Many states elaborate strategies and projects for improving their universities’ competitiveness abroad because the competition at the world educational services market is growing and it is becoming extremely difficult for universities to achieve a high level of internationalization just at their own expense. Academic mobility is going to grow for several years due to the development of information technologies, a decrease in travel costs and the realization of respective state strategies.

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